

REMARKS

This response is submitted in reply to the Office Action. In the Office Action, the Examiner required a restriction to one of the following groups of inventions:

Group 1 - Claims 1-3, 7, 8, 12-16, 19, and 20;

Group 2 - Claims 9 and 21;

Group 3 - Claims 10 and 22; and

Group 4 - Claims 11, 23, 24, and 26.

Applicant hereby provisionally elects the invention of Claims 1-3, 7, 8, 12-16, 19, and 20 with traverse. Applicant respectfully requests that the requirement for restriction be withdrawn for the following reasons. As set forth in the Manual Of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP):

There are two criteria for a proper requirement for restriction between patentably distinct inventions:

(A) The inventions must be independent ... or distinct as claimed; and

(B) There *>would< be a serious burden on the examiner if restriction is >not< required.

MPEP, Sec. 803(I). In this application, there would be no serious burden on the examiner if restriction is not required because all of the claims of have already been subjected to substantive prosecution (including the Office Action mailed July 5, 2006). Moreover, all claims of the four Groups are patentable for at least the reasons set forth in the Amendment filed on September 25, 2006. Accordingly, the criteria for a proper requirement for restriction have not been met, and withdrawal of the requirement for restriction is respectfully requested.

In the event that the Restriction Requirement is maintained, this election is made without prejudice to the Applicants' right to pursue non-elected claims in a divisional application(s). The Applicants agree that unpatentability of any of Claims 1-3, 7, 8, 12-16, 19, and 20 does not necessarily imply unpatentability of any of the non-elected Claims 9-11, 21-24, and 26.

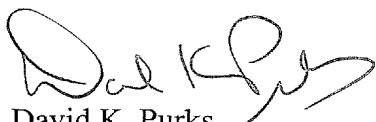
Claims 1, 9, and 10 have been amended to correct minor typographical errors therein.

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New Claims 27-29 depend from Claim 1 and include recitations that are directed to the subject matter of non-elected independent Claims 9, 10, and 11.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the above-entitled application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested. If, in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephonic conference would expedite the examination of this matter, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at (919) 854-1400.

Respectfully submitted,

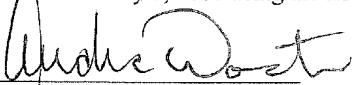


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Audra Wooten
Date of Signature: January 5, 2007